of storing a plurality of phonebook entries, each entry representing a respective subscriber and an associated telephone number, the phonebook being accessible through the man-machine interface, wherein:

the phonebook is capable of storing, for at least one of the phonebook entries, information about an operational status of a respective subscriber; and

the controller is adapted to update the operational status information of the at least one phonebook entry in response to status data, which are received through the radio interface .

2. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the operational status information may represent a situation, where the respective subscriber is currently participating in an ongoing telephone call.

3. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the operational status information may represent a situation, where the respective subscriber is currently not participating in any ongoing telephone call and is operatively accessible .

4. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 3, wherein the controller is adapted, in response to receiving status data to the effect that the respective subscriber is currently not participating in any ongoing telephone call is operatively accessible, to provide an indication to the user through the output device.

5. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 4, wherein the output device comprises at least one of a display, an indication lamp, a loudspeaker and a vibrator.

6. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the operational status information may represent a situation, where the respective subscriber is not operatively accessible.

7. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the operational status information may represent a situation, where the respective subscriber is currently using call diversion.

8. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the telecommunication apparatus comprises a mobile telephone.

9. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the radio interface is adapted to receive short text messages, and wherein the status data is comprised in such a short text message.

10. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the radio interface is adapted to receive the status data on a data channel in a digital telecommunications system.

11. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, wherein the radio interface is adapted to receive the status data over at least one of a GSM, GPRS ("General Packet Radio Service") and UMTS ("Universal Mobile Telephone System") network.

12. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 1, further comprising functionality for accessing a global area network, wherein the status data is received over said global area network.

13. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 12, further comprising a WAP ("Wireless Application Protocol") client, by means of which the status data is received.

14. (AMENDED) A method of operating a telecommunications network involving a plurality of subscribers of mobile telecommunications services, the method comprising the steps of:

providing an option for an individual subscriber to select at least one other subscriber,
keeping record of the selected subscriber,
determining an operational status of the selected subscriber, and
transmitting the determined operational status to the individual subscriber.

15. (AMENDED) The method of claim 14, wherein the operational status may reflect any of the following situations: the respective subscriber is participating in an ongoing telephone call; the respective subscriber is not participating in any ongoing telephone call and is operatively accessible to the telecommunications network; the respective subscriber is not operatively accessible to the telecommunications network; or the respective subscriber is currently using call diversion.

16. (AMENDED) The method of claim 14, wherein the determined operational status is transmitted in a short text message.

17. (AMENDED) The method of claim 14, wherein the determined operational status is transmitted over a data channel in a digital telecommunications system.

18. (AMENDED) The method of claim 14, wherein the determined operational status is transmitted according to a communications protocol for accessing a global area network.

19. (AMENDED) The method of claim 14, wherein the determined operational status is transmitted over a GPRS or UMTS network.

allow

20. (AMENDED) A telecommunication apparatus for use in a telecommunications network, the apparatus having a radio interface, a controller, a memory, a man-machine interface to a user of the telecommunication apparatus, and a digital message service application capable of communicating a digital message to a remote telecommunication apparatus through the radio interface and the telecommunications network, the apparatus comprising:

first means for receiving a request to check an operational status of the remote telecommunication apparatus, said request being submitted by the user through the man-machine interface;

Q1 second means for reading a first record to identify the remote telecommunication apparatus;

third means for generating a first digital message, wherein said first digital message contains said first record as well as a second record to identify said telecommunication apparatus;

fourth means for causing the digital message service application to send said first digital message to the remote telecommunication apparatus;

fifth means for receiving a second digital message from the remote telecommunication apparatus;

sixth means for determining the operational status of the remote telecommunication apparatus from the second digital message; and

seventh means for indicating the determined operational status of the remote telecommunication apparatus to said user through the man-machine interface.

21. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein the second digital message is a reply to the first digital message and contains a data field to indicate that the remote telecommunication apparatus is connected to the telecommunications network .

22. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 21, wherein said data field indicates that the remote telecommunication apparatus is involved in an ongoing telephone call.

23. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 21, wherein said data field indicates that the remote telecommunication apparatus is not involved in an ongoing telephone call and is therefore operatively accessible.

24. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein said first record represents a telephone number of the telecommunication apparatus.

25. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein said second record represents a telephone number of the remote telecommunication apparatus.

26. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein said seventh means is adapted to provide the indication of the determined operational status of the remote telecommunication apparatus to said user through at least one of a display, an indication lamp, a loudspeaker and a vibrator.

27. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 21, wherein said data field indicates that the remote telecommunication apparatus is involved in call diversion or call forwarding.

28. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein the telecommunication apparatus comprises a mobile telephone.

29. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein said first digital message and said second digital message are short text messages.

30. (AMENDED) The telecommunication apparatus of claim 20, wherein said first digital message and said second digital message are transferred over a GPRS or UMTS network.

31. (AMENDED) A method of communicating operational status information between a first telecommunication apparatus and a second telecommunication apparatus in a telecommunications network, the method comprising the steps of:

through a man-machine interface of the first telecommunication apparatus, receiving a request from a user of the first telecommunication apparatus
to check an operational status of the second telecommunication apparatus;

in response to receiving said request from said user, generating a first digital message ;

sending said first digital message to the second telecommunication apparatus;

receiving said first digital message in said second telecommunication apparatus;

in said second telecommunication apparatus, generating a second digital message , containing an indication of the operational status of the second telecommunication apparatus;

sending said second digital message to the first telecommunication apparatus;

receiving said second digital message in the first telecommunication apparatus; and

in the first telecommunication apparatus, providing a notification to said user concerning the operational status of the second telecommunication apparatus, as indicated in said second digital message.

32. (AMENDED) The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of checking, in the second telecommunication apparatus, whether the first telecommunication apparatus is an admissible requestor of operational status information regarding the second telecommunication apparatus.

33. (AMENDED) The method of claim 31, wherein said second digital message comprises a time stamp representative of a creation time of said second digital message, the method further comprising the step of determining, in said first telecommunication apparatus , whether a difference between a current time and said time stamp is less than a predetermined limit and, if not, sending a new first digital message to the second telecommunication apparatus .

34. (AMENDED) The method of claim 31, wherein said step of providing an indication to said user of the operational status of the second telecommunication apparatus is done through at least one of a display, an indication lamp, a loudspeaker and a vibrator in the first telecommunication apparatus.